

Discussion Questions, *Anna Karenina*, Books 4 -8

1. Initially, Alexy Alexandrovitch agrees to grant Anna a divorce, but later changes his mind. Why do you think he changes his mind? Was he sincere in the first place? Did he truly forgive Anna on her deathbed while she was giving birth?
2. Anna, on her deathbed seems to confuse Vronsky with Alexandrovitch. She asks Alexandrovitch for forgiveness, but later does not wish to be associated with him. What leads to her confusion; is it a repeat of the dream in which she wishes to be married to them both? Why does she later feel repulsed by Alexandrovitch?
3. Alexy Alexandrovitch claims to be motivated by spiritual matters. Is his behavior consistent with his avowed spirituality? Is he “spiritual” in his thoughts, but somehow lacking in his actions?
4. What motivates Anna? She claims she is motivated by a need for love, but is this the case? She does not seem to believe Vronsky’s professions of love, and always seems to want something else. What do you believe motivates her? Can she find love, or is she seeking for something else?
5. Does Vronsky grow in the second half of the novel? Has he changed as a result of Anna’s death? Is he more sympathetic than Alexandrovitch?
6. Throughout the novel, there is a tension between material and spiritual happiness. Who are the characters who seek material happiness? Do they find it? Who are the characters who seek spiritual happiness? Do they find it?
7. Kitty grows during the novel, from a young, inexperienced girl into a wife and mother. Does Kitty find herself in the novel, and if so, how?
8. At the birth of his son, Levin has an insight, as follows (Chapter 13, part 7): “All he knew and felt was that what was happening was what had happened nearly a year before in the hotel of the country town at the deathbed of his brother Nikolay. But that had been grief—this was joy. Yet that grief and this joy were alike outside all the ordinary conditions of life; they were loopholes, as it were, in that ordinary life through which there came glimpses of something sublime. And in the contemplation of this sublime something the soul was exalted to inconceivable heights of which it had before had no conception, while reason lagged behind, unable to keep up with it.” What does this passage mean? How did this affect Levin in the remainder of the novel? Does Levin find happiness, and if so, how?

9. As a result of Levin's insight, captured above, he resolves to change, but at the end of the novel, he reaches another realization. What is that realization? Is it believable? By the end of the novel, does he achieve the goodness that was lacking in some of the other characters?